



SENATOR
BILL HARDIMAN

E-Hardiman Herald



*Chair, Families & Human
Services Committee
Appropriations Committee:
Chair, Family Independence
Agency, Commerce Labor
& Economic Development,
Capitol Outlay,
Higher Education*

JANUARY 2005

HARDIMAN REINTRODUCES HMO FLEXIBILITY BILL

After a very disappointing pocket veto of Senate Bill 1150 late last legislative session, Senator Bill Hardiman reintroduced his bill which would foster more leeway in what benefit options health-maintenance organizations can offer. The pressure on employers to provide adequate and affordable health care coverage is greater than ever due to rising costs. The re-introduced Senate Bill 88 seeks to provide more flexibility of co-pays and co-insurance for these employer groups and others to secure the comprehensive coverage offered by HMOs with perhaps reduced premiums. Traditional HMO high-level basic-health benefit plans wouldn't be affected by the bill.

Governor Granholm's signature on Senate Bill 1150 would have been a positive response to the growing crisis of the uninsured due to the loss of affordable coverage. According to a number of surveys, at least two-thirds of the uninsured are employed, but lack health care coverage primarily due to the cost. Additionally, this legislation would have changed state law so health plans could continue to provide Medicaid services even if Congress changes the program.

In a tight budget year, this option is better than cutting services, reducing eligibility or slashing provider rates. However, without the support of the Governor, this improvement can not be realized. Michigan residents, workers and employers deserve to have the health care option this legislation would have created.

Senate Bill 88 has been referred to the Senate Committee on Health Policy.

MICHIGAN SENATE DIVING INTO THE PRICE OF GOVERNMENT

This week the Senate Republican Caucus announced that Michigan will attempt join a handful of other states that have overhauled how they spend taxpayer dollars by prioritizing government programs and services based on the results residents want and need.

Several states, including Washington and South Carolina, have successfully switched to results-based government that focuses on how the state can best spend the taxpayer's money. State leaders will be seeking to answer four questions during the budget process.

The four questions are:

1. How much revenue will the state have for fiscal year 2006?
2. What results matter most to Michigan's citizens and how does government set priorities to attain those results?
3. What percentage of the budget should be spent to achieve each result?
4. How can government best deliver results?

Question No. 1 was answered earlier this month when the Revenue Estimating Conference set the state's revenue at \$39.5 billion. The Senate will focus on the best use of the state's \$39.5 billion in taxpayer funds instead of the magnitude of cuts that are necessary to "balance" the budget. We have a constitutional duty to ensure the budget spending is balanced with revenue, but we have a more important duty to balance spending with wise and effective public policy.

The Senate will also prioritize and "purchase" government actions which lead to results that are important to citizens instead of a "continuation" budget which simply perpetuates past spending and forgotten priorities.

As chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on the Family Independence Agency (which is the third largest budget), Senator Hardiman will have a key role in what services are delivered to Michigan's citizens.

On Thursday, February 10th the Governor will unveil her budget recommendations to the legislature.

SENATOR HARDIMAN PARTICIPATED IN TOWN HALL MEETING

On Monday, January 24th Senator attended a public town-hall forum that focused on drug-abuse among young people. The town-hall meeting was sponsored by Comcast Cable and the Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Network of West Michigan.

Hardiman stated the issue of drug use and abuse among young people is more important today than ever before. Late last year, West Michigan witnessed two heroin-related deaths of young people in the Grandville area.

Although teen drug use has declined about 17 percent nationwide since 2001, it remains a problem. According to the University of Michigan's annual Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey, 51 percent of high school seniors have tried illicit drugs. Forty percent of 10th graders have used drugs and 22 percent of 8th graders, according to statistics in the 2004 MTF report.

There were well over 100 people in attendance to discuss the growing problem of drug abuse in our community. The forum had panelists ranging from Dr. Yvonne Blackmond, Michigan's Drug Czar to students and family members facing drug related problems.

The underlined theme of the meeting was that help must initially begin in the home.

SAVE THE DATE

On Saturday, February 12th at 6:30pm enjoy an evening together at Frederick Meijer Gardens for dinner, entertainment and prizes. Speaker: Senator Bill Hardiman on "Marriage: A Covenant of Commitment."

Space is limited, please contact Laurie at 616-975-2137 for ticket and price information.

SENATOR HARDIMAN ANNOUNCES DISTRICT OFFICE HOURS

Starting Monday, February 7, Senator Hardiman will be holding monthly district office hours throughout the 29th district. Office hours will be held on the first Monday of each month from 10:00am – 11:30am.

? Monday, February 7 office hours will be located at the Kentwood Library, 4700 Kalamazoo SE, Kentwood, MI 49508.

Senator Hardiman will hold this time each month so constituents of the 29th district have an opportunity to speak to him about any questions or concerns they may have regarding state issues. You can also contact Senator Hardiman via his toll-free number: 1-866-305-2129 or e-mail: senbhardiman@senate.michigan.gov to set-up a meeting outside of the district hours.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The Hardiman Herald is designed to provide residents and organizations with a timely update of Senator Bill Hardiman's activity in Lansing. If you have any questions, please contact Senator Hardiman's office.

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